

Submission made by Mr.Nepuni Piku representative from the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR) to the 20th Session of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous population(UNWGIP) from 22nd July – 26th July 2002, Geneva.

Under agenda item No: 05 - Recent Development



Respected Chairperson,

I take this privilege to congratulate you for taking up the responsibility as the new Chairperson of the UNWGIP. I also want to thank you on behalf of my organization - the Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights for availing us this opportunity to share with the honourable members of Working Group and to all esteemed participants to this 20th Session of the UNWGIP, Geneva about the recent developments with the Naga People and our homeland.

The ongoing Peace process and Indo-Naga Political dialogue since the declaration of ceasefire between the Government of India and the Naga Resistance Groups (NSCN) in 31st July 1997 have continued to hold on despite many serious limitations and setbacks.

The Naga Peoples Movement for Human Rights taking this opportunity of cease-fire and peace process took up our roles to facilitate democratic space for people to come together to speak without fear of their pains, their joys, their hopes, their insecurities and their vision; to democratise the peace process by encouraging, empowering and facilitating people's participation in decision making processes that affects their lives and their future as we believe that the process of democratising peace process involves transcending beyond the negotiation table and initiating peoples-to-peoples dialogue; to create awareness and public opinion on issues of rights and to prepare our people for peace and reconciliation.

The objectives of these Initiatives were to identify the roots causes of the political conflict; to Initiate a process where we empower one another so that we can as a people define the problem from our perspective and decide how and what would be the best way for us to resolve it; to strengthen the capacity and capabilities for people to decide what is best for them; to understand together the many different concepts and the complexities of the process involved in cease-fire, negotiation, peace process, reconciliation and nation building; to analyze together our realities, the power structure and the issues that we face as a people; to recognize the need to safeguard and promote the positive aspects of indigenous value system and ways of organizing; to identify together our roles and to evolve some concrete initiatives that will strengthen the Naga peoples struggle for dignity, justice and peace; and to dream together of the vision that we envision and to begin visualizing and working together towards creating alternative structures based on a relationship of partnership and equality and to begin working towards a new pattern of human relationship and human association through healing in ourselves as individuals, in our people collectively, in our land and with other people.

With these objectives in mind and the role we have assumed, NPMHR has continued with the initiative of people-to people dialogue with the civil society groups in the Indian sub-continent and with our neighbouring communities in North-eastern India. The Kohima meet on human rights, justice and the Naga peace process in March 2001, with representatives from different civil society organizations from all over the Indian sub-continent recommended a follow up action in the form of fact-finding mission with the objective of making an 'independent investigation of reported cease-fire violations, and more generally to sound out

people in all walks of life on the merits and defects of the 1997 cease-fire agreement and of the peace process as a whole'. Following this initiative a Report entitled "Four Years of the ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim: Promises and Pitfalls" was released 'as a prelude, or so we hope, to further initiatives' on 19th April 2002 at New Delhi (which I hereby submit for your kind reference).

The Peace process has continued notwithstanding the slow progress made at the political dialogue front. The Naga civil society groups and various peoples representatives has also participated in two recent consultation (January and May, 2002) apart from others, organized at the capital city of Thailand, Bangkok under theme 'strengthening peace strategy' to facilitate peoples participation in the peace process through the invitation of the NSCN. The Bangkok Naga consultation Statement also maintain that Great Britain has the moral and legal obligation to clarify her position on the Naga people and their land, which India claims to have inherited from the then British-India.

NPMHR has continued with its campaign for repeal of anti-democratic legislation such as the APCOCO, POTA, etc and including Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act that continues to remain in force despite the ceasefire agreements. In order to facilitate political dialogue and the peace process NPMHR demanded that the Indian army should go back to the barracks and that NSCN cadres be confined to their designated camps during this period of ceasefire. NPMHR has also demanded the lifting of the ban imposed on various Naga National Movement groups including the withdrawal of arrest warrants issued on the various National Resistance leaders.

The Naga National reconciliation process was also launched on 20th December 2001 under the initiative of the Naga Hoho (representative traditional institution) along with various social and community based organizations, Women organization, Students federation and the Churches to bring about healing to the deeply hurt and fractured Naga society as an impact of more than five decade protracted Indo- Naga conflict.

Despite the peace overture, the Naga people have to be confronted with a more subtle form of war from the Indian state and its agencies. Even though there is cessation of open armed hostility and lessening of physical violence, massive psychological warfare continues to be waged trying to break the will and spirit of the people in their struggle for dignity, justice and peace. The five (5) year long ceasefire has been extended for another year with affect from the 1st of August 2002. In a recent Joint Communiqué issued on the 11th of July 2002 from Amsterdam, by the Government of India and the NSCN, the Statement says, **"the Government of India recognizes the unique history and situation of the Nagas. It is agreed that talks should proceed in an accommodative and forward-looking manner so that a lasting and honourable solution can be arrived at"**. We believe that this will set the space for political negotiations to take place.

On behalf of a struggling and suffering people, I appeal and implore the world community to support and strengthen this peace process, so that we can peacefully resolve the long drawn political conflict. We seek your understanding, wisdom and critical solidarity so that we can bring peace to our people and the region.
Thanking you.

Kuknalim!